

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 SS-15 L-03
NSC-05 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /076 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0512
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR, US
SUBJECT: FRENCH REACTION TO SUPREME COURT DECISION
ON CONCORDE.

1. SUMMARY - SUPREME COURT DECISION ON CONCORDE HAS MET WITH PREDICTABLE WELCOME FROM FRENCH MEDIA. PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE ARE ONLY GOF OFFICIALS WHO HAVE THUS FAR COMMENTED. AIR FRANCE IS PREPARING FOR FIRST PROVING FLIGHT TO NEW YORK OCTOBER 19 AND PLANS COMMENCE DAILY SCHEDULED SERVICE NOVEMBER 22. PRESS REACTION IS BALANCED, HOWEVER, IN FACE OF EVIDENCE THAT THERE MAY STILL BE OBSTACLES FOR CONCORDE TO OVERCOME AT NEW YORK. END SUMMARY.

2. THOUGH BANNER HEADLINES IN THE FRENCH MORNING PRESS OCTOBER 18 WERE RESERVED FOR THE SUCCESSFUL TEMINATION OF THE LUFTHANSA HIJACKING, CONCORDE WAS STILL FRONT PAGE NEWS IN ALL PAPERS FOLLOWING THE SUPREME COURT'S ANNOUNCEMENT THE PREVIOUS DAY OF REFUSAL TO GRANT A FURTHER STAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION OF THE COURT OF APPEALS. THE CONCORDE NEWS WAS ALSO UNCLASSIFIED

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PROMINENTLY FEATURED ON TV AND RADIO.

3. ONLY GOF STATEMENTS THUS FAR ARE BY PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE. BARRE IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "I HAVE ALWAYS (SIC) THOUGHT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD RESPECT THE PRINCIPLE OF LOYAL COMPETITION." CAVAILLE ISSUED A STATEMENT TO

AFP WELCOMING THE "CAPITAL VERDICT" WHICH THE SUPREME COURT HAD RENDERED. "FAIRNESS WON OUT, AS DID OUR PERSEVERANCE," SAID CAVAILLE, WHO ADDED THAT HE WAS NOW "REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC WE CAN OVERCOME THE REMAINING OBSTACLES SO THAT THE TEMPORARY AUTHORIZATION WE HAVE TODAY CAN BECOME DEFINITIVE." AIR FRANCE AND BRITISH AIRWAYS WERE, HE SAID, ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF WORKING OUT FINAL TECHNICAL DETAILS WITH THE NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY SO THAT PROVING FLIGHTS COULD BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IT WAS LATER ANNOUNCED -- BY CAVAILLE, ACCORDING TO REUTERS, AS WELL AS BY AIR FRANCE -- THAT THE FIRST PROVING FLIGHT WOULD TAKE PLACE ON OCTOBER 19.

4. GIRAUDET, PRESIDENT OF AIR FRANCE, AND PEROL, DIRECTOR GENERAL, WERE INTERVIEWED ON TV AND EXPRESSED OBVIOUS SATISFACTION. THEY ANNOUNCED THAT AIR FRANCE PROPOSED TO INAUGURATE COMMERCIAL SERVICE TO NEW YORK EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 22 WITH ONE DAILY ROUND TRIP FLIGHT, DEPARTING PARIS AT 11:30 AM AND ARRIVING AT NEW YORK AT 8:30 AM, THEN DEPARTING NEW YORK AT 10:30 AM AND ARRIVING AT PARIS AT 8 PM (ALL LOCAL TIME). GIRAUDET ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEW YORK ROUTE WOULD NOT BRING TOTAL UTILIZATION TO THE 2,700 HOURS ANNUALLY PER AIRCRAFT WHICH WOULD MAKE CONCORDE PROFITABLE TO THE CARRIER.

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5. ROGER CHEVALIER, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF AEROSPATIALE, IS REPORTED AS SAYING THE SUPREME COURT DECISION WAS THE "FORTUNATE RESULT OF PERSEVERANCE AND RESPECT OF RIGHTS UNDER INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS."

6. AS FOR THE PRESS REACTION, THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING NUANCES. AFTER ALL THE EMOTION THAT THE CONCORDE ISSUE

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HAS GENERATED IN FRANCE, THE PRESS HAS REACTED TO THE NEWS FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARDLY. WHILE SOME PAPERS CONSIDER THAT THE COMMENCEMENT OF COMMERCIAL SERVICE ON NOVEMBER 22 IS "OFFICIAL", "THE GREEN LIGHT HAS BEEN GIVEN", ETC., THE NOTION THAT AN IMPORTANT BATTLE HAS BEEN WON BUT NOT YET THE WAR IS STILL PRESENT IN MOST STORIES. IT IS NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY COULD STILL FORMALLY PETITION THE SUPREME COURT TO REVIEW THE COURT APPEALS' DECISION, THOUGH SOME DOUBT IS EXPRESSED THAT THE SUPREME COURT WOULD ACCEDE TO THIS REQUEST OR THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY WILL EVEN CHOOSE TO PURSUE THE LEGAL BATTLE ANY FURTHER. STORIES REFLECT CONTINUING MISTRUST OF THE PORT AUTHORITY, AND ESPECIALLY ITS CURRENT EFFORTS TO COME UP WITH NEW NOISE RULES DIRECTED AGAINST CONCORDE. AND, IT IS RECALLED, THE COMMUNITIES AROUND JFK, HOSTILE TO CONCORDE, STILL HAVE TO BE WON OVER.

7. LE QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS SOUNDS ON SOURE NOTE, HOWEVER, IN A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL ENTITLED "YES FOR CONCORDE
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AT NEW YORK BUT IT'S A LITTLE LATE", LE QUOTIDIEN CONCLUDES: "OPERATION OF THE PARIS-NEW YORK ROUTE BY THE SUPERSONIC WILL SHOW A DEFICIT. IT IS PRACTICALLY EXCLUDED THAT FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN WILL PRODUCE MORE THAN SIXTEEN CONCORDES. FAITHFUL TO A DESTINY TRACED BEFORE ITS BIRTH BY A PROJECT FOR WHICH CONCERN OVER NATIONAL GRANDEUR WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PROFITABILITY, CONCORDE WILL HAVE IMPOSED ITSELF IN ALL WAYS EXCEPT COMMERCIALLY-".

8. L'HUMANITE, WHILE WELCOMING THE SUPREME COURT

DECISION, DEVOTES THE BULK OF ITS LONG ARTICLE TO LAMBASTING THE GOF FOR ALLEGEDLY NOT BEING FORCEFUL . ENOUGH IN DEFENDING FRENCH INDUSTRY AGAINST THE US AERONAUTICAL "TRUSTS."

9. LES ECHOS HAS SOME GOOD NEWS AND SOME BAD NEWS, DEPENDING ON WHICH SIDE OF THE FENCE YOU'RE ON. AIR FRANCE, REPORTS LES ECHOS, HAS DECIDED NOT TO SUE THE NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY FOR DAMAGES IN ORDER NOT TO RISK FURTHER POISONING RELATIONS WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY. THAT'S GOOD NEWS FOR THE PORT AUTHORITY BUT BAD NEWS FOR FRANCE, WRITES LES ECHOS, SINCE FAILURE TO SUE MEANS "ONCE AGAIN MISJUDGING THE AMERICAN MENTALITY AND DEPRIVING ONESELF OF AN ARGUMENT THAT COULD HAVE WEIGHT IN COMING NEGOTIATIONS." AND YESTERDAY'S GOOD NEWS FOR AIR FRANCE STILL WON'T OFFSET THE BAD NEWS, ACCORDING TO LES ECHOS, THAT AIR FRANCE STANDS TO LOSE 300 MILLION FR. LAST YEAR.
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